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ETHIOPIA: ANATOMY OF A REVOLUTION

The military is openly ruling Ethiopia. Following the deposition of Emperor Haile Selassie on September 12, the Armed Forces Coordinating Committee (AFCC), a group of about 100 young officers and enlisted men which surfaced in late June, declared a provisional military government and appointed Lt. Gen. Aman Michael Andom, the Minister of Defense and Chief of Staff, as Prime Minister.

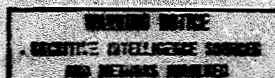
The AFCC has retained the largely civilian cabinet for the time being, apparently because of uncertainty about the military's governing capabilities. The constitution has been suspended and parliament has been dismissed. New elections have been promised, presumably after a new constitution has been approved, but no date has been set.

Monarchy or Republic? The draft constitution provides for a figurehead monarchy, but a republican form of government is increasingly mooted as an alternative. The unprepossessing Crown Prince, who is in Geneva convalescing from a stroke suffered almost two years ago, has been invited back as a constitutional "king" (not Emperor), but his return is uncertain.

The AFCC is divided on the preservation of the monarchy: for some officers, it is a valuable legitimizing symbol, especially in the countryside; for others, it is irrelevant or worse. Neither the Crown Prince nor his eldest son—the next in line—could command the respect once accorded to Haile Selassie. So far the countryside has not reacted to the deposition; it might be won over to the AFCC's side if the military speedily delivers on its promises of land reform.

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Haile Selassie's Fate. Haile Selassie, who is under arrest, has become the symbol of the sins and omissions of the old regime. His downfall stemmed from his proclivity to megalomania and his position as the cornerstone of a discredited system. His refusal to hand over foreign assets will subject him to continuing military harassment. But the shreds of his reputation as an African statesman and peacemaker will probably prevent his execution; the AFCC wishes to avoid tarnishing its image at a time when it is seeking international acceptability and increased foreign assistance.

Who Is Running Ethiopia? Aman is a front man for the AFCC, which contains diverse tendencies and opinions. The most influential group within the committee is a nucleus of perhaps as few as 7-10 officers, most of whom remain unknown to us but who are believed to be majors assigned to the Fourth Division in Addis Ababa. They were organized and plotting before the January-February 1974 military and popular demonstrations and took advantage of the unrest to set a revolution in motion.

In the struggle to establish their power, they weathered a challenge from the right--the nearly successful counterblow of the Emperor and aristocracy in late May. Having gained the upper hand, they survived a challenge from within the military--the demonstration staged by Korean and Congo veterans in August.

They now face new challenges, from:

- AFCC members (particularly air force officers) who want more rapid and far-reaching change, and their civilian allies in the university and the labor unions;
- Aman, who is popular with the ranks, personally magnetic, and perhaps reluctant to take orders indefinitely from his juniors (he is rumored to be the likeliest president of a future republic); and
- the provincial elite, who are still entrenched in the countryside.

Our evidence suggests that the inner core of officers probably are graduates of the 1961 class of the Harar military academy. Among the brightest secondary school students

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in the late 1950's, they were conscripted into the army to be the academy's first cadets. Suspected of sympathizing with the abortive Imperial Bodyguard coup in 1960, they were banished to the university for graduate study. Many attended the American-founded and administered law faculty. Some became fascinated with legal and constitutional mechanisms for promoting fundamental change as an alternative to the abrupt and bloody 1960 confrontation with the Emperor.

Throughout the past six months, the Harar graduates and their sympathizers have employed Haile Selassie's own pragmatic and gradualist tactics against him. Seeking a consensus among the military for each move, avoiding serious civilian reactions, and working to build a constituency among educated urban elements, they have waged an almost totally bloodless war of attrition against the old regime.

What Do They Want? The goals of the Harar group, and probably of most AFCC members, are:

- Constitutional government, with or without a figure-head monarchy, but guaranteed by the military in either case. An earlier distaste for military government has given way to a willingness to experiment with it, at least until a more representative parliament can be elected and land reform is underway.
- The destruction of the feudal social order. Most of the leading figures in the aristocracy are under detention and face expropriation of their property. A number of AFCC members have family ties with the aristocracy (the majority of Harar cadets come from well-to-do landed families) but now profess egalitarian principles.
- The accommodation of ethnic and regional dissidence (the priorities being Eritrean insurgents and Ogaden Somalis, with the southern Gallas a third potentially restless group) through political decentralization. Separatism will not be tolerated, however. The younger military appear to be less discriminatory along tribal lines than Ethiopian society as a whole. But a potential split exists between the army, dominated by Amharas and Gallas, and the more radical air force, dominated by Tigreans and Eritreans.
- Active government encouragement of socioeconomic development. The AFCC plans a larger economic

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role for the government but resists categorizing its policies as socialist. A distinction has been made between undertakings in which the royal family and aristocracy have major interests, which have been nationalized, and foreign investments, which so far have been unaffected.

--Reform of the military. High on the AFCC's list of grievances against Haile Selassie was the divisiveness he fostered within the military in an attempt to ensure its loyalty. The AFCC plans to reorganize the military into an effective fighting force by ensuring promotion on the basis of merit, ending massive corruption, improving coordination, and making better use of weaponry on hand.

Most AFCC members endorse the above goals--all avowedly "revolutionary" and "radical" within the Ethiopian context--but they differ on the pace and method of change. Advocates of Maoism, communism, "African Socialism," or the "Tanzanian model" can be found within the AFCC ranks. They may influence eventual decisions on such issues as the monarchy, the degree of civilian participation in the government, the fate of Haile Selassie and other political prisoners, and the degree of government intervention in the economy.

Unresolved Problems. The AFCC dilemma is whether to replace the old regime with a more acceptable civilian government or to supplant it. At the moment only Aman and a police officer hold cabinet posts. If military men take over most of the portfolios and if Aman's appetite for political power grows, the military may become the new governing class. As far as we know, this is not the present intention of the Harar group, but it may occur in any case.

Whatever the outcome, the Ethiopian military is making a revolution. It has been confined so far to the upper classes and the cities, but it is still a revolution in that the balance of social classes has been altered and the first steps toward restructuring of the economy have been taken.

Foreign Policy Objectives. Most AFCC members are more preoccupied with internal reforms than with foreign affairs. Their first priority is to regenerate and modernize Ethiopia; then, they reason, it can better deal with foreign enemies.

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It is difficult, however, to gauge how the military perceives Somali intentions and the need for more foreign military aid:

--Aman and senior civilian ministers who have pressed hard for additional US arms may be vying for military support; they may also be echoing the concerns of a vocal AFCC faction.

--The Harar group reportedly suspected the older, senior officers of having overdramatized the "Somali threat" in order to gain access to more military resources.

The military overhaul envisaged by the AFCC will require more and better arms, but, if forced to choose, the AFCC may be reluctant to allocate scarce resources to armaments rather than to development needs. While the AFCC will defend the existing national borders as fervently as the old regime, it may seek to improve relations with Somalia in an attempt to defuse the Ogaden issue, possibly by reviving proposals for joint Ethiopian-Somali economic development of the region.

In dealing with other foreign policy issues, the AFCC is likely to follow these guidelines:

--Pursue the rapprochement initiated by the old regime with sympathetic Arab states, such as the Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt.

--Emphasize third-world solidarity even more than did the old regime, which showed increasing reluctance to align itself with the United States on international issues.

--Continue to favor the US as its arms supplier, more for technical than ideological reasons.

--But solicit arms aid from France, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the PRC, and the USSR, especially if the US is unresponsive to Ethiopia's military needs, and also to diminish Ethiopian dependence on a single supplier.

--Loosen bilateral ties with the US as the new order tries to distance itself from the policies of the old regime.

Prepared by A. M. Reid; x22297

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